



Active Community Environments (ACEs)



What Active Community Environments (ACEs) are places where people of all ages and abilities can easily enjoy walking, bicycling and other forms of active recreation. These areas:

- Support and promote physical activity.
- Have sidewalks, on-street bicycle facilities, multi-use paths and trails, parks, open space and recreational facilities.
- Promote mixed-use development and a connected grid of streets, allowing homes, work, schools and stores to be close together and accessible by walking and bicycling.

When In recognition of the fact that ACEs can provide unique opportunities for impacting physical activity levels, the N.C. Division of Public Health developed the *Winning with ACEs Guide – How You Can Work Toward Active Community Environments* in June 2003.

Where ACEs are places where people are able and encouraged to walk, bike or roll along in a wheelchair for both pleasure and purpose. The goal is for all 100 North Carolina counties to work toward becoming active community environments.

Why Most communities today were designed to favor one mode of travel – the automobile – and usually do not have connected sidewalks or bicycle facilities. Building roads, schools, shopping centers and other places of interest only for convenient access by cars often keeps people from safely walking around the town, riding bicycles or playing outdoors. Ironically, this may create traffic problems by forcing people to be automobile dependent.

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of the environment in shaping behavior. Public health professionals can become leaders in implementing strategies that focus on changing environments to enhance physical activity opportunities.

Who The *Winning with ACEs Guide* was developed to assist North Carolinians who are interested in making their communities more supportive of physical activity. The primary audience for the *ACEs Guide* is public health practitioners, but many community groups and grassroots coalitions will also find the information useful, as they become involved in land use and transportation planning process.

How Creating ACEs represents a valuable opportunity for health advocates interested in increasing opportunities for people to be physically active. *The Winning with ACEs Guide* serves as a primer for helping interested parties in influencing policy decisions to change physical environments and social norms. It provides guidelines for working toward the establishment of policies that support the building of sidewalks and paths that allow for safe walking and bicycling, thereby reducing the risks for chronic health problems.

For more information please visit www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com

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